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CIA/RR G/I 59-49  
GUINEA  
30 October 1959

## VI. GENERAL DATA

A. Population: In 1957 the African population of Guinea was estimated to be 2,492,000; and in 1954 the European population was estimated as 7,000.

B. Area: 95,000 square miles.

C. Topography: Guinea is a crescent shaped country facing the Atlantic Ocean. It is dominated by an irregularly shaped mass of mountain-and-plateau land that extends 300 miles in a northwest-southeast direction and is nearly 100 miles wide. Lowlands are found only near the coast and in the extreme northwest. Near northeastern Sierra Leone the highland is almost divided into two parts by the headwaters of several short rivers that flow southwestward through Sierra Leone to the coast and by the headwaters of the Niger which flow northeastward. Spurs from both parts of the highland flank the upper Niger drainage basin, most of which is a little below 1,000 feet in elevation.

The northern part of the highland, Fouta Jalon, is a dissected plateau with a complex ridge and valley pattern. The elevation ranges from 1,000 to 4,000 feet above sea level, with a few peaks rising somewhat higher. On the west, steep scarps separate the highland from a 30-mile-wide sandy plain that is bordered by coastal marshes and mangrove swamps.

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The southern part of the highland, known as Guinea Highlands, lies east of the Liberian border and is generally between 1,000 and 3,000 feet above sea level. Two peaks, however, are more than 5,000 feet high, and many isolated dome-shaped hills with bare rock surfaces rise 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the surrounding terrain. Individual ranges trend northeast-southwest. As in Fouta Jalon, bold scarps are common on the west side of the Guinea Highlands; slopes on the east are gentler.

D. Climate: Guinea has a tropical monsoon climate with two strongly contrasting seasons. The wet season is unpleasantly hot and wet, and the dry season unpleasantly hot and dusty.

From April-May to October-November the warm moist southwest monsoon brings copious downpours to coastal areas and the western slopes of Fouta Jalon and Guinea Highlands. East of the highlands precipitation is not so heavy. Everywhere July and August are the wettest months with 10 inches or more of rain during each month. On the coast 40 inches is common for each of these months. Cloudy skies, stifling air, violent thunderstorms, and floods make this a difficult season for the westerner, both physically and mentally. Even when the thermometer fails to reach 90°F the profusion of moisture in the air and on the ground maintain discomfort, and night brings little relief. Inland from the coast, the rainy season becomes progressively shorter and less wet.

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During the November-to-April dry season, a dry dusty northe ast wind, the Harmattan, blows from the Sahara across all of Guinea. Almost no rain falls and humidities are lower, but the air is hazy with dust and the smoke of bush fires, and night fogs are common in low moist areas. Daytime temperatures are well over 90°F, except in the highlands, but nights bring relatively comfortable temperatures in spite of high humidities in the early morning.

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